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ABSTRACT

"The Goldfinch" is a magazine aimed at introducing young people to Iowa history. Each issue has a different topic which is discussed in detail throughout that issue. There are articles which describe different aspects of the topic. The topic for this particular issue is "Iowans with Disabilities." Featured articles from this issue include: "Learning about Disabilities"; "Caring for Iowans with Disabilities"; "Voices from Glenwood"; "Helping Technology"; "Andrew Clemens"; "Learning the Manual Alphabet"; "Rose Quinn"; "Working on the Railroad"; "Hattie Voeklers"; "Kurt Kehrli"; "It's the Law: Serving People with Disabilities"; "The Polio Epidemics"; and "Living with Polio." Regular features include "Dear Diary" and "Be a Diary Detective." (RH)

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ED 461 577

Iowans with Disabilities

Amy Ruth, Ed.

The Goldfinch: Iowa History for Young People
Volume 19 Number 1 Fall 1997

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THE Goldfinch

Iowa History for Young People

Volume 19, Number 1 Fall 1997 • $3

Iowans with Disabilities

Learning about disabilities

A young Sabula, Iowa, girl in a wheelchair or baby carriage, around 1905. SHSI (Iowa City)

A disability is a condition, either permanent or temporary, which keeps people from doing something – such as joining a sports team, driving a car, or living alone.

One in every five Americans has a disability. And at some point in their lives, almost all Americans will experience a temporary disability, whether it is a broken limb or temporary memory loss.

For the historian, learning about disabilities in the past is not always easy. Many people in the past believed that those with disabilities should be hidden away. They were rarely photographed or included in social events. In some ways, the lives of past Iowans with disabilities remain a mystery.

In this issue of *The Goldfinch* you will meet a few Iowans who lived with disabilities in the state's past. Their lives were recorded in photographs and other historical documents that survive today. Learn how their disabilities affected their lives, and the lives of their families and read about changing attitudes towards people with disabilities. Once viewed as incapable of contributing fully to society, people with disabilities have fought to be accepted for what they can do, not what they can't.

As you read this issue, you will notice that we sometimes used some out-of-date terms to describe people with disabilities. Words such as "moron," "feeble-minded," and "deaf and dumb" were used in Iowa's past but are not appropriate today. GF

– The Editor

THE Goldfinch
Volume 19, Number 1 • Fall 1997

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Necessary Adjustments, an exhibit about Iowans with disabilities, will be on display at the Grout Museum in Waterloo through January 11, 1998. For information, call (319) 234-6357.

Serving all Iowa readers

Since 1994, *The Goldfinch* magazine has also been available on cassette tape for the blind, the visually impaired, the physically disabled, and the learning disabled. For more information contact the Iowa Department for the Blind, 1-800-362-2587. Or write to the Iowa Department for the Blind Library, 524 4th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

On the cover

Cover photo courtesy Judy Hoit

Judy Hoit of Coon Rapids, Iowa, sews a leather pouch during an occupational therapy session at a polio clinic in Georgia, 1956. Judy contracted polio when she was four years old. Read more about Judy's experiences on page 27.

Winner of two 1997 Edpress Distinguished Achievement Awards for excellence in educational publishing.

Caring for Iowans with disabilities

Institutional living in the 1800s and early 1900s offered little privacy. How are these sleeping quarters different from your bedroom at home?

In the 1800s, people with mental and physical disabilities began to be segregated from society more and more. As cities grew, and work moved from farm and home to factory and office, people with disabilities found it harder to participate in the workplace. Many people even believed that those with disabilities should not mingle with "normal" people.

People with disabilities were rarely photographed and not given many opportunities because they were seen as "different." Those with mental disabilities were called "mental defectives" and were thought to have "brain diseases" or "mania." A person with a physical disability was "lame" or "deformed."

After the Civil War, Iowa opened institutions for people with disabilities. Some were schools that provided education and training for life outside the institution. Others were little more than warehouses where people were forced to spend their entire lives. The Institution for Feeble-Minded Children opened in Glenwood, Iowa in 1876. Feeble-minded was a broad term used to describe a variety of mental disabilities, including mental retardation.

A 1910 newspaper article reported a colony was needed to prevent "epileptics from mingling in society and propagating their kind." In 1917, the Woodward Colony for Epileptics opened in Woodward. It became common in the late 19th and 20th centuries to discourage people with disabilities from marrying and having children. Sometimes adults with disabilities were operated on so they could not have children.

When Glenwood became overcrowded, Woodward changed its focus and admitted "feeble-minded" children.

In the 1800s and early 1900s, most state schools like Glenwood and Woodward ran large farms where residents helped raise food needed to support the institution. The Woodward farm raised corn, wheat, cattle, hogs, and a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Hospitals for "insane" adults opened in Mount Pleasant in 1861, Independence in 1873, Clarinda in 1888, and Cherokee

in 1902. Because people with mental and physical disabilities were sometimes assumed to be criminals, those without jobs or other means of support might be sent to reform schools and work farms where they usually did not receive proper care.

Doctors in the 19th century often didn't know enough to create appropriate treatments and care. What doctors did know led them to believe that people with disabilities would live lives of dependency, making few contributions to society. As a result, residents in the state's institutions were rarely encouraged to learn and so did not develop to the best of their abilities. Some people with disabilities spent much of their lives in institutions.

The state's institutions were often overcrowded and understaffed. Overworked attendants did little more than tend to residents' basic needs. Some residents were treated harshly by today's standards. Residents who were unmanageable and violent were sometimes kept in

In the 1800s and early 1900s, pregnancy was considered a type of disability. Pregnant women stayed home until their bodies returned to "normal." Photos during pregnancy or soon after giving birth – like this one taken in 1939 – were rare. SHSI (Iowa City)

After wars, many soldiers, like the one above, returned home with disabilities. SHSI (Iowa City)

cells resembling prisons or confined to restraints.

Having a family member with a disability in the 19th century was a source of shame for many people. At Woodward, many relatives did not want their family names associated with the institution. When residents died, they were buried in gravestones marked with numbers instead of names.

For people with disabilities who lived at home, there were few opportunities for education and work. To care for their relative, a family might rely on questionable home remedies. An 1890s book offered remedies for various ailments, including epilepsy, hysteria, and apoplexy. As with many disabilities, there was no "cure," and these remedies probably had little effect.

Wars increased awareness and services for people with disabilities. As war veterans returned home without limbs or with severe head wounds, families, communities, and governments struggled to reintegrate them into work and social life. Iowa veterans with disabilities were sent to training centers where they learned how to live with a disability. One Iowa soldier, who had been a farmer before losing his right arm during World War I, was retrained to work as a bookkeeper.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of social upheaval in the United States as women and minorities lobbied for equal rights. People with disabilities also demanded better education and services. In the 1970s, the U.S. Congress passed several laws to better serve people with disabilities.

Institutions were also changing. Those in charge realized that separating people with disabilities from society was not necessarily the best treatment. The movement towards independent living began. New training programs were established so that all people were given jobs they could enjoy and complete, no matter what their ability. At Woodward, residents (often called "clients") manufacture and package a variety of items, such as snacks and garbage bags, run a recycling plant, and build and refinish furniture.

Better care and services, as well as medications, have decreased enrollment at the state's institutions. At its peek, Woodward housed as many as 2,000 people. Enrollment in 1997 averaged 280.

Today, the goal of most of Iowa's institutions and independent living centers is to help people with disabilities live independent and productive lives, and to educate others to value them for their abilities instead of discriminating against them for their disabilities. GF

– Amy Ruth

Helping technologies

by Amy Ruth
with special thanks to
Doug Baynton

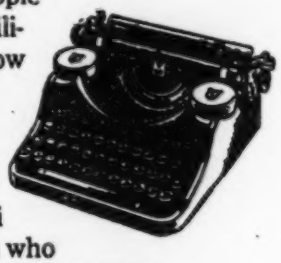
Throughout history, technological advances have generally made life easier. For people with disabilities, however, technology has both encouraged and discouraged a life of independence.

Early wheelchairs, known as "invalid chairs," did not help users move independently because they were heavy and hard to steer. Users had to rely on another person to push them. Early wheelchairs reflected society's attitudes. Because people with disabilities were expected to stay home and out of public view, most people didn't believe they needed reliable transportation. (Turn to page 27 to see an example of an older wheelchair.)

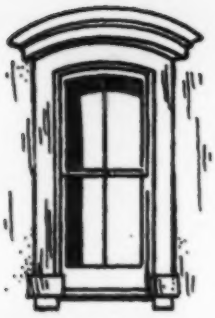
There were wheelchair improvements after the Civil War, World War I, and World War II, when many soldiers came home with disabilities. Often, however, people with disabilities were not consulted in the design and manufacturing of wheelchairs. In the 1970s, wheelchair design improved even more when people with disabilities designed chairs to suit their needs.

Other technologies have aided people with disabilities. For example, silent films in the late 1800s and early 1900s were well-received by the deaf community. However, this technology excluded blind people. But sound in movies, on the radio, and on television excluded deaf people. Today, closed-captioning helps deaf people enjoy movies and television. Descriptive video explains television and movies to blind people, and talking computers help them use this revolutionary technology. Electricity, first introduced into American homes in the 1880s, helped deaf people create ways to be more independent. Instead of door bells, deaf people use door lights that flash when the button is pushed. Their alarm clocks use flashing lights or vibrating pads to wake them up.

There are many examples of inventions that were created to help people with disabilities that now benefit all people. A father invented the Jacuzzi for his son who had severe arthritis. The typewriter was invented for blind people but is used by many sighted people. Curb cuts were originally made to give easy sidewalk access to people who use wheelchairs, but also benefit those who use bicycles, baby carriages, and other vehicles. Even closed-captioning on television screens helps the non-disabled population – immigrants learn English by studying the words and the sounds together.



What are some of the other technological advances that benefit Iowans with and without disabilities?



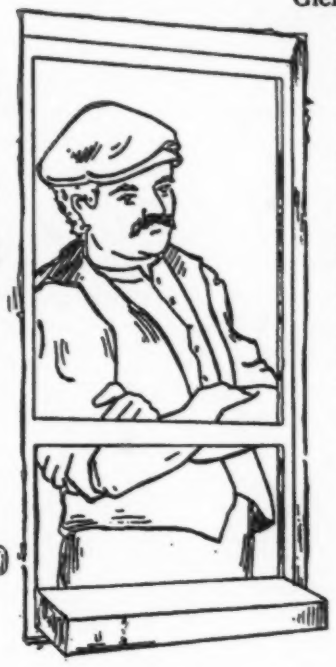
Voices from Glenwood

by Shana Wingert

Iowans Art Mencl, Liz Stemmel, and John Welsh lived at the Glenwood State Hospital School in Council Bluffs. Glenwood is a care facility for Iowans with severe disabilities, such as mental retardation. In Iowa's past, children were sent to Glenwood and similar facilities for a variety or reasons. Kids who committed small crimes or no longer had parents to care for them were sent to live in county and state institutions. In the 1990s, officials and volunteers with the Hospital School in Iowa City conducted oral histories with Art, Liz, John, and other Glenwood residents to find out about their lives. Art and John spent most of their lives at Glenwood between the 1930s and the 1960s. Liz was there for about five years. Here are their stories.

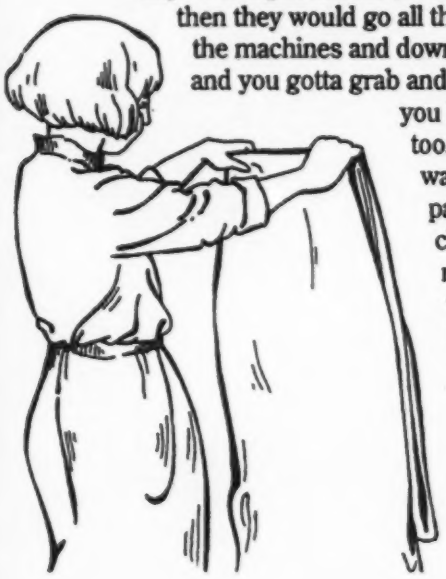
Art Mencl

When I first came to the institution, I was seven years old. I didn't know what was going to happen when I got there because it was . . . so strange to me. . . Before I went to Glenwood, I was [disabled] in a car accident. Two years later my dad got killed . . . then my mother didn't know what to do with us, so she took and put my brothers in a foster home and took me to court, and the court sentenced me down at Glenwood for life, because my mother couldn't take care of me. . . She told me she said she didn't have enough money to take care of us . . . I couldn't do much work, and I hurt my . . . right arm and right leg, and my mother figured that when I grew up that I'd be in a wheelchair and I wouldn't be able to do any work of any kind. . . I was in the school [at Glenwood] for at least three years, probably four, and then they put me on the job. . . I couldn't hate the people that raised me and educated me [at Glenwood] because if it wasn't for them cracking down on us like that we would have never learned how to do anything. . . When I was grown up, . . . I wanted to leave the institution, but I just didn't want to leave my friends behind. . . but I guess that was the way I had to do it. Either I had to stay there or leave. So I left, and I told them, 'Maybe one of these days we'll run into each other again.'



Liz Stemmell

I was at the [Annie Wittenmeyer] Home and I guess that my mother was trying to fight to get me out of there and then somehow they told my mom she couldn't control me or something, then they just came and got me the next day and said I was going to Glenwood. I think I was either 8 or 9 when I went. . . The adults and the kids were in the same building. One very big huge building that had, I think, three stories. The little ones were kept downstairs and the older kids were kept upstairs. And the living quarters were downstairs and the bedrooms . . . They had just a bunch of beds in there and you just had a bed in one of those rooms. . . Didn't get any privacy what-so-ever. . . You had to share bathrooms. They wasn't partitioned, it was just right out there in public. You had no privacy what-so-ever . . . I did not see my mother at all since I been at Glenwood. . . I learnt one skill at Glenwood . . . when they taught me how to work in the laundry. . . You put sheets [in the machine] and then they would go all the way through the machines and down the other end and you gotta grab and fold them. And you had to be fast, too. . . The day I was leaving they packed my clothes and told my mom . . . I was coming home. . . The state made a wrong decision about me.



John Welch

I got caught down by the depot, the police caught me because I took money from my neighbor. I run down to the depot and they caught me and brought me home. Me and my mother went to the courthouse. And then they had to send me to Glenwood for doing that. . . I was about six or seven years old when I took that money from my neighbor . . . That was pretty bad to send me to Glenwood . . . They took me out [of school] when I was 13 or 14 years old. . . Then I started getting jobs. I worked on the trash wagon, and from the trash wagon I worked in the chapel, and from the chapel I worked as a detail boy until I . . . took care of little kids. I took care of babies. I used to feed 'em and dress 'em and all that. . . I worked in the garden on the farm at Glenwood, I planted onions and stuff like that. . . Then they had a vineyard there, where they had apples and pears. We used to go out and pick grapes and all the stuff. . . I was [at Glenwood] 30 years.

ASK YOURSELF

1. Why were Art, Liz, and John sent to Glenwood?

2. How did they feel about life at Glenwood?

3. Why do you think Art and John spent so much time at Glenwood?

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

Dear Diary . . .

In the summer of 1866, 23-year-old Amanda Shelton worked as a bookkeeper in the Mount Pleasant Hospital for the Insane. She was well-qualified for the job: she had been a Civil War nurse and was college-educated. Although her official duties involved paying bills and preparing reports, she often visited with the patients. Throughout the summer of 1866, Amanda kept a diary detailing what it was like to live and work at the hospital.

July 8th

At the close of [chapel] service an epileptic patient had a severe fit.

I do not intend to stay here long. But think a few months experience will do me good.

Friday July 13th 1866

The patients have been dreadfully restless all day. A Mr. Green in one of the "strong cells" had made noises enough to excite the whole establishment . . . He stands at his window and calls out to everyone he sees.

Tonight as he stood in the door he advised Miss Bell not to wear her dresses so long as it was "wicked sinful, wasteful, nasty, etc."

Miss Bell and I go into the wards & converse with the patients every evening. They are always glad to see us.

Wednesday July 25

I have just come up from the dance. It was so funny to see the way in which some of the patients hopped about.

Most of the patents who are not allowed to dance are permitted to look on.

Miss Bell & I went this afternoon into the wards where the excitable patients are kept. They came round us chattering and grinning in a delighted manner. One who sometimes crows and often swears & raves politely informed us that we were nice girls and she intended to have us murdered.

July 31 1866

There is one horrible creature in one of the strong cells. The Attendant opened the door to let us take a peep at her. She was perfectly naked and had wallowed in her own filth until she was horrible to behold. When the door closed she beat the floor with her limbs and roared like an enraged animal. . . Oh it is dreadful!

August 4th

As I went down stairs I heard a strange noise in the hall and saw a young man in a terrible fit. His mother — a widow — and he her only son — had brought him to consult with the Dr. As are all epileptics — his case is hopeless.

Saturday Aug 11

A woman was brought here on Wednesday and died Thursday night. It is necessary to bury those who die, after dark, as it excites most of the patients to see signs of a burial.

September 9 1866

One of the patients . . . escaped the night before last. He was nearly well. He was a "fast" man & his insanity was temporary — resulting from drinking to excess.

Adapted from an article by Sharon E. Wood.

Be a diary detective

Amanda Shelton's diary reveals common 19th-century attitudes towards people with disabilities. Today, attitudes have changed. While some of Amanda's descriptions and comments may seem cruel or inappropriate, they are important to the historian who uses them to understand the past. Continue your study of Amanda's diary by answering the questions below.

Amanda Shelton wrote her 1866 diary at the Hospital for the Insane at Mount Pleasant, pictured above. SHSI (Iowa City)

① Why do you think the patients were happy to see Amanda when she visited them?

② According to Amanda's diary, why did burials occur at night?

③ What do you think a "strong cell" is?

④ In her entry on September 9, why do you think Amanda used the word "escape"?

⑤ Why do you think the attendant allowed Amanda to view a patient in the strong cell? (See entry dated July 31.) How do you think an attendant would handle such a request today?

Two state schools

Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School students rollerskating on campus.

In the late 1840s, several deaf Iowans attended a school for the deaf in Illinois. Soon a teacher from the Illinois school, W.J. Ijams, opened a private school for the deaf in Iowa City that later became a state school in 1855. The Iowa legislature named it the Iowa Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb. (At the time, the word "dumb" meant not speaking. This is no longer an appropriate term for the deaf.) Before Iowa established its first school for the blind in Iowa City in 1853, Samuel Bacon taught three blind Iowans in Keokuk. Blind himself, Bacon fought to change the school's name, Asylum for the Blind, because it did not reflect the school's mission.

Both schools soon outgrew their buildings in Iowa City and the search for permanent locations began. Many Iowa towns welcomed the schools. Blind students moved to Vinton in 1862 and deaf students relocated in Council Bluffs in 1870. Both towns saw the schools as economic growth opportunities.

Early name changes recognized the schools' educational purpose. In 1888, children who were deaf attended the Iowa School for the Deaf, which is still the name today. Blind students saw four different names before its present name, Iowa Braille School, gained in 1951. The school name made the most significant change in 1872 when it replaced "institution" with "college." But it wasn't until after 1910 that the schools found official status as learning centers when the State Board of Regents took control.

Iowa School for the Deaf

In the beginning, students who were deaf learned industrial skills that were useful to the school. Students worked with their hands and learned skills such as shoemaking, carpentry, gardening, dressmaking, cooking, and baking. Students in sewing classes made clothes for the other students while others made their shoes. Farming students grew fruits and vegetables which fed students, faculty, and staff at mealtimes. Carpentry students fixed broken stairs and built shelves.

Students also learned with their hands. Throughout much of the 1800s, manual communi-

cation by signs and finger spelling was used in classrooms across the country. This changed around the turn of the century when schools for the deaf began to oppose the use of American Sign Language (ASL). Instead of learning both sign language and oral communication, students were restricted to speech and lip-reading only. By 1920, nearly all of the 187 students at the school in Council Bluffs were not allowed to use sign language in the classroom, although students continued to use ASL outside the classroom to talk with each other. Sign language was not used in most classrooms again until the 1970s.

After the 1930s and 1940s, when the school lost its farm operations, it emphasized academics rather than industrial skills.

The school saw its highest enrollment ever, 412 students, in the mid 1970s because a 1960s rubella epidemic increased the number of children born deaf. Also at this time, sign language replaced oral instruction in the classrooms. Students were also taught to develop speech and lip-reading skills.

Today the school serves about 225 deaf students, but only 130 actually live at the school. The others attend classes during the day or attend mainstreaming programs in their communities.

Iowa Braille School

During the school's early years, students primarily learned by having lessons read to them because they did not have materials like books with raised print. In addition to academic subjects, students engaged in music and industrial skills like broommaking and sewing.

In 1863, students tried the Braille system of raised dots for reading and writing. However, it soon lost favor as another raised dot system, called New York Point, predominated.

Vinton residents enjoyed the school's music program. Students were also busy with sports, clubs, and chores.

Boys and girls sat on opposite sides of the classrooms, dining room, and chapel.

Large print for students with partial sight was introduced in the 1940s. After World War II, students learned a cane technique called "rhythm walking." This enabled students to go places by themselves.

In 1970, the school began a program to meet the needs of students who were both blind and deaf as a result of the 1960s rubella epidemic. These students communicated by using "tactile sign language" – signing into each others' hands.

Today, the school is home to 55 students during the school week but serves about 400 students across Iowa.

In 1975, Congress passed a law stating that children with disabilities had the right to be educated in the "least restrictive environment." For many Iowans, this meant going to local schools rather than Vinton or Council Bluffs. After 1975, the schools' residential population declined significantly. Still, the Iowa Braille School and the School for the Deaf remain places where Iowa children learn and grow. GF

– Lin Ly

Andrew Clemens

Courtesy McGregor Historical Museum

Andrew Clemens as a young man.

Andrew Clemens never thought he would become a world famous artist. In 1862, when the McGregor, Iowa, boy was five years old, he became deaf. Instead of attending the McGregor school with his brothers, Andrew learned at home with his mother and later enrolled at the Iowa Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in Council Bluffs. He attended the school for six years until a school fire forced him to return home in 1877 at age 20.

Andrew was determined not to let his disability or any other hardships stand in the way of his goals.

"Never will I try to make a living *because* of my affliction," he told his mother. "I want to *do* something with my life."

By the time of his death in 1894, Andrew was famous throughout the world as a master craftsman and skilled designer of sand art.

Andrew produced miniature pictures in glass bottles, delicately positioning loose grains of colored sand to form the design. Although he began by making simple diamond and flower patterns, eventually he designed complex portraits and landscapes.

Because Andrew did not use the traditional artist's tools of paints and brushes, he had to rely on his creativity. His "paints" came directly from the Iowa soil. Andrew used 45 different shades of colored sandstone, which he gathered from an area called Pictured Rocks located along the Mississippi River two miles south of his McGregor home. His handmade "brushes" were straight sticks carved of green hickory, a curved fishhook stick, and a tiny tin scoop to hold the sand.

Andrew perfected a complicated process for creating his designs. First, he made sure the sand was dry. With his tools, he separated the sand until only grains of the same size remained. Then he packed the sand into bottles with his tools. Perhaps the most amazing thing is that the majority of the bottles he used were round-top drug jars popular during the Victorian era. This style of jar made it necessary for Andrew to "paint" his pictures upside down, filling the bottle through the opening which was also the bottom. With his fishhook stick, he inserted the sand through the mouth of the bottle. He used the hickory stick to keep the picture straight.

Once Andrew completed a design he placed a stopper in the bottle and sealed it with pitch, a waxy substance. No glue or paste was used in the process. The sand was held in

place by pressure and the bottle's stopper. That meant that Andrew had to be very careful while he worked. A broken bottle meant instant destruction of a creation that often took months or longer to complete.

Andrew sold his bottles at a McGregor grocery store. Soon, his popularity spread as travelers and steamboat agents bought the bottles as souvenirs and presents. As orders began to pour in by mail from across the country and Europe, Andrew promptly opened his own business in his home.

Although many of Andrew's creations were original designs, he also took orders for specific pictures. His reproductions of railway bridges, locomotive engines, and new homes provide an excellent view of life in the late 1800s, making Andrew a sort of historian. His most famous work portrays George Washington riding a white horse.

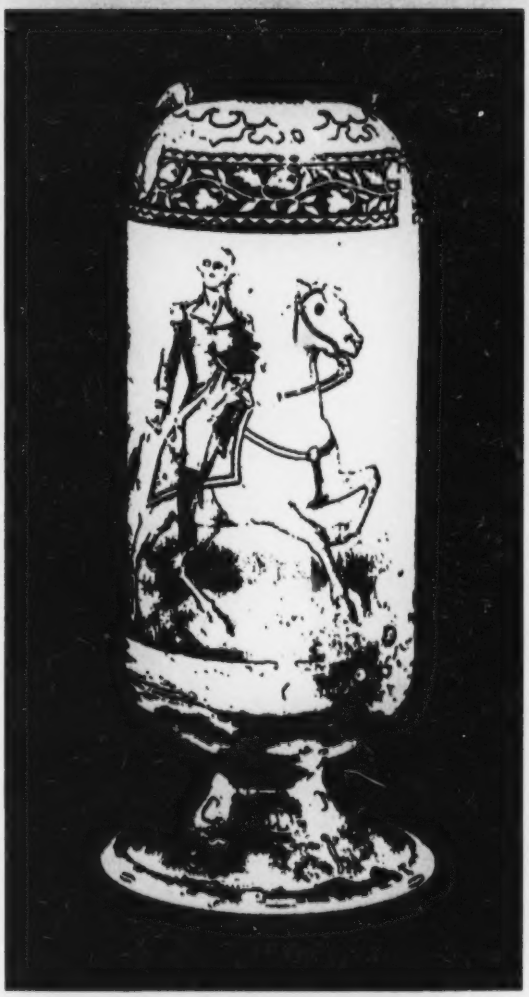
Andrew charged remarkably low prices for these creations, considering the amount of time and effort required for each one. A small bottle sold for one dollar (about $16 in today's money), while a larger personalized bottle with more elaborate designs cost six to eight dollars (between $96 and $128 today.)

Andrew's cramped, enclosed work area may have contributed to his development of tuberculosis which caused his death at the age of 37.

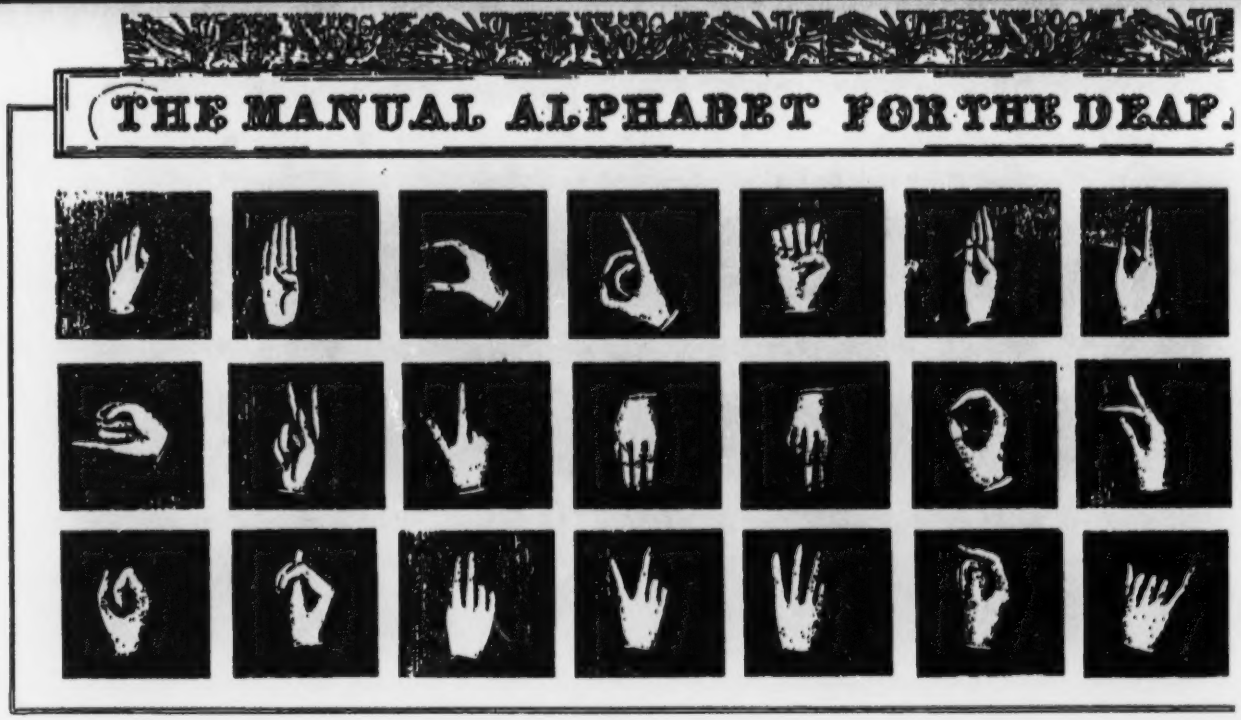
Although Andrew probably created more than 100 sand art masterpieces, time and carelessness have destroyed many of them. A few bottles remain intact for future generations of Iowans to enjoy and appreciate. The McGregor Historical Museum and the State Historical Society of Iowa own several bottles, including the intricate George Washington bottle.

During his short life Andrew accomplished his goal, creating an artistic world that allowed him to express himself while earning a living. GF

– Shana Wingert



Andrew Clemens created this portrait of George Washington with millions of colorful grains of sand. Because the bottles had to stand with the mouth end down, Andrew "painted" his pictures upside down, inserting the sand through the narrow bottle neck. SHSI (Des Moines) Photo by Chuck Greiner



Learn the Manual Alphabet

American deaf people standardized American Sign Language (ASL) in the 1800s in order to communicate with one another.

Learning ASL is like learning a foreign language. ASL is not English translated into signs. The language has its own grammatical structure and uses hand forms and motions to convey meaning.

Some educators in the late 1800s believed that deaf people should not communicate through sign language, but instead should only speak English and read lips. Sign language was often forbidden in schools for the deaf. Sometimes, deaf students' hands were tied so they could not sign in the classroom. However, students continued to sign at home and among each other, and the language survived.

Use the illustrations in this activity to practice finger spelling.

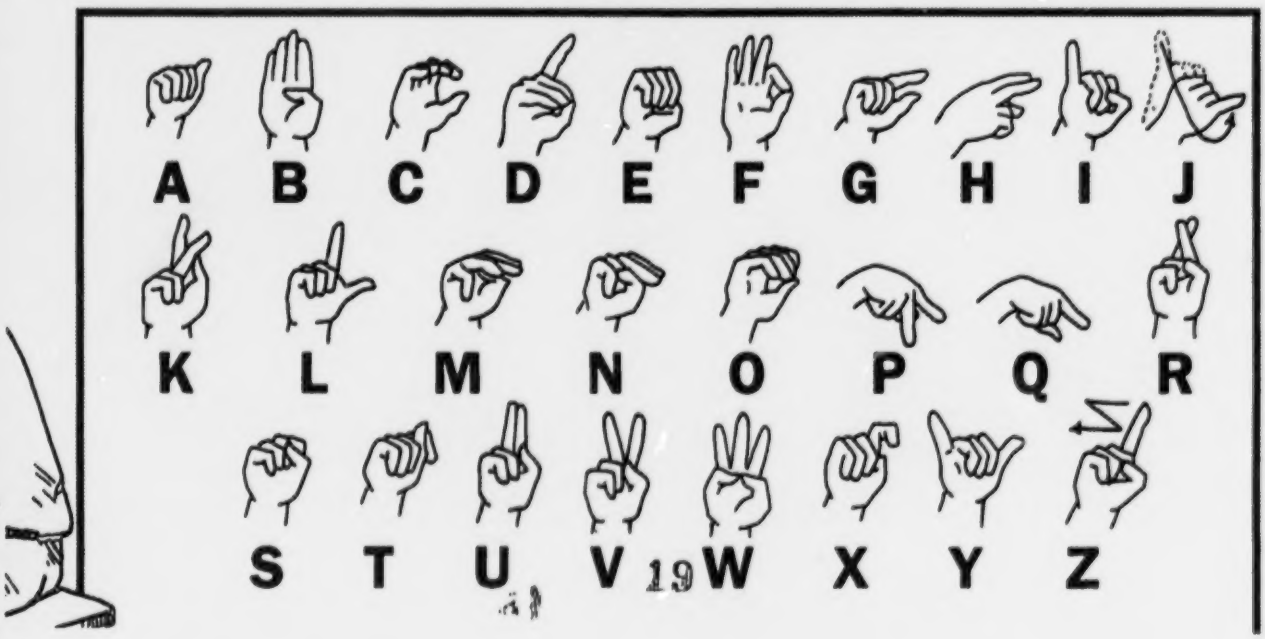
Deaf people use finger spelling to supplement ASL. If there isn't a sign for a person's name or a place, they will spell out the word, letter by letter.

Adapted from Signing Naturally, DawnSignPress

This finger spelling chart from the 1800s is taken from a poster called THE MANUAL ALPHABET FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB. The poster may have been used in an Iowa classroom or other institution.

Ask Yourself

1. Compare the modern manual alphabet pictured below to the one on the previous page. Has this alphabet changed much since it was invented? (HINT: don't let the angle of the hands trick you!)
2. Do we use the term "deaf and dumb" today? Why or why not? Why do you think people in the 1800s used this term?
3. Practice the manual alphabet by finger-spelling your name, the name of your school, your friends' names, and names of objects.
4. How is ASL different from finger-spelling?



Rose Quinn

Although it was once common to exclude people with disabilities from photographs, the Quinn family included Rose in their family portraits. Here, 16-year-old Rose poses in 1914 with her parents and eight siblings.

Five-year-old Rose Quinn loved to climb the trees on her family farm near Riverside, Iowa.

Born in 1898, Rose had only a few years to enjoy scrambling up tree trunks. When she was two, Rose and her siblings became ill at the same time with mumps, measles, and whooping cough. Easily treated today, there were no vaccinations for these illnesses when Rose was a child. The family was **quarantined**, and throughout the long winter months no one was allowed on or off the farm. One by one, the Quinn children recovered. But Rose did not get well. She was the only child in the family to also become ill with spinal meningitis. To make matters worse, severe arthritis damaged her joints.

For the next few years, Rose struggled to walk. When she was old enough to attend the area country school, her father or older brothers carried her to the outskirts of the school yard, where they set her down so she could walk the rest of the way.

"She did not want the kids to see her being carried to school," her grand-niece, Nancy Lee Jennings, told *The Goldfinch*.

When it became too painful to walk, Rose studied at home.

Slowly, the arthritis spread

Quarantine – keeping sick people separate so disease doesn't spread

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Courtesy Mary Jane Quinn Ryan

Courtesy Mary Jane Quinn Ryan

FAR LEFT: Rose's wheelchair made it easier to get around. In 1923, at age 25, she poses with two nieces. LEFT: Rose poses with an unidentified playmate in 1904. At six years old, Rose was in the early stages of her disability. BELOW: Rose was an avid letter writer all her life. This is her signature.

Rose Quinn

through her body until she was frozen in a sitting position. She could no longer walk or sit up without support. She stopped growing and remained very thin and fragile.

In the early 1900s, Americans were often scared of people whom they saw as different. Rose's disability made her look different but her family did not see that as a reason to exclude her from the community. "She wasn't hidden away," Jennings said.

Sometimes, it was difficult to move Rose from place to place. Before she was given a wheelchair, Rose's father and brothers carried her on a straight-back dining room chair. She went to town and church and visited relatives.

Although there were many things around the home Rose could not do because of her arthritis – peel potatoes and wash dishes, for example – she found things she could do. Rose sewed and crocheted and wrote many letters to her extended family members. "It's amazing that she could do all that," said Jennings. "Her hands were so twisted."

After her parents died, Rose's siblings continued to care for her in the family home in Riverside. She enjoyed visits from her grand-nieces and made clothes for their dolls.

Rose Quinn died in 1977 at the age of 80. She once told her grand-niece, Nancy Jennings, that she knew she would never walk again but that she was sure she would climb trees in heaven. GF *– Amy Ruth*

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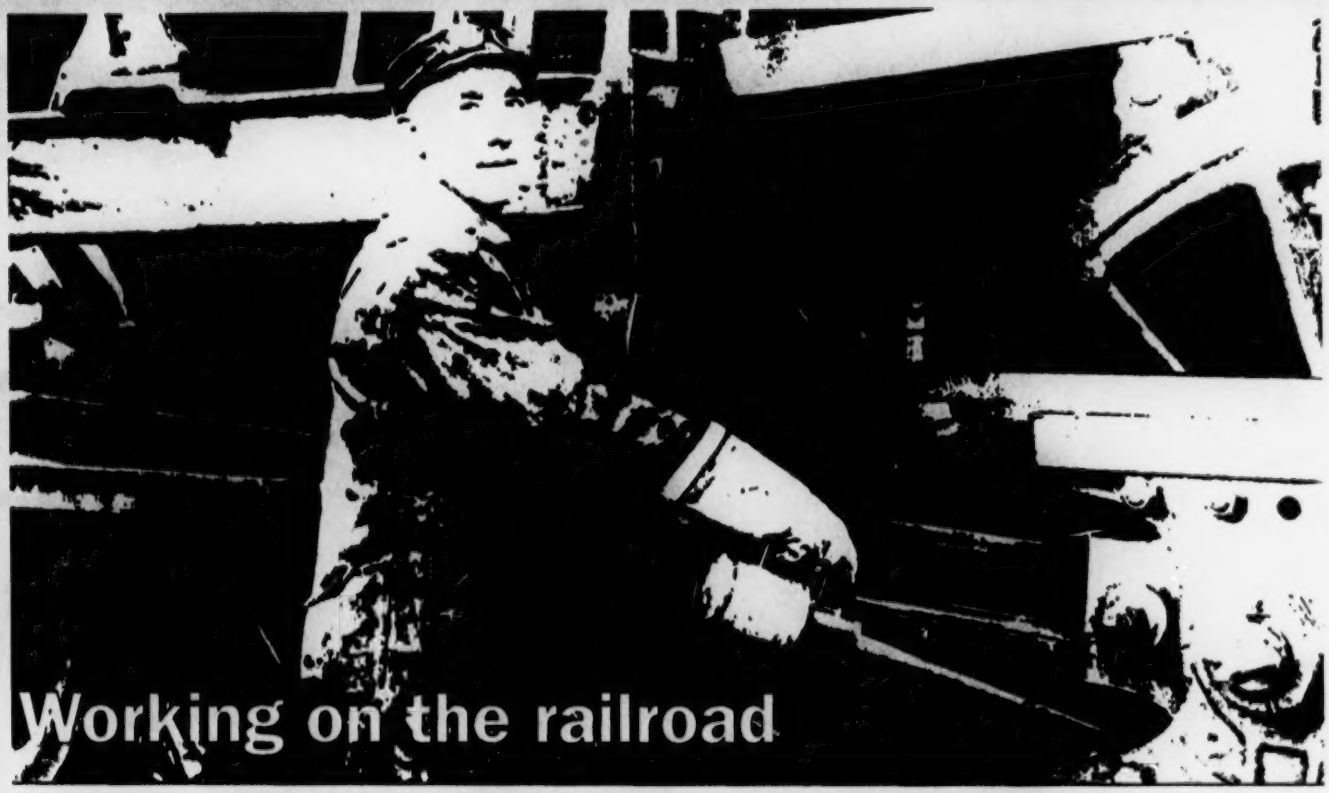

Working on the railroad

Working near running machinery caused disabilities among railroad workers of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This man greases a wheel at the turn of the century.

Being a railroader in Iowa in the 1800s was dangerous work. Railroad brakemen had to run on top of moving trains and jump from car to car, turning brakewheels on the outside of each car. Ice, low bridges, and sudden stops could throw a brakeman off a speeding train. Brakemen also were injured when they ran between railroad cars to work the couplers which linked cars together. These workers could get crushed between the boxcars or get their fingers pinched off. Other workers lost legs or feet when the train ran over them. The public, however, mostly did not notice or care when railroaders were injured. They thought that injury was merely part of the job.

In the 1870s, bosses sometimes liked to hire railroaders with a missing finger because these men were clearly tough and experienced. Workers who lost their legs in accidents often worked as watchmen or as office clerks for their railroad — jobs requiring less physical dexterity. The Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy even set aside one line just for old and previously injured railroad

workers. Only the most seriously injured men were considered truly "disabled."

Still, accidents affected railroading families. Insurance companies often refused to insure railroad workers because their work was so dangerous, so most families did not have insurance money when something went wrong. The company sometimes gave food, money, or medical help but often made workers sign a document saying the company was not responsible for the accident. Even if a railroader sued, the company had more lawyers and more money. Laws favored railroad companies. What could railroaders with disabilities do?

First, these workers often depended on their families and neighbors for assistance. Wives and children took part-time jobs to help the family finances. Of these workers, most tried to find jobs away from the railroad. A railroader named Nelson Baldwin from Council Bluffs, for example, had his arm crushed between two freight cars. He left railroading and found a job making cigars. Because of his disability, however, Baldwin could not make enough cigars to earn a living, so he became a waiter. Railroaders with disabilities often bounced from job to job after their injury, and they usually made a lot less money after their accidents.

In the 1870s, some railroad workers wanted companies to make work safer by installing automatic couplers and putting brakes inside the train. Companies thought that these safer devices would cost too much money. Workers and their friends realized that the only way to make companies install safety appliances would be to require it by law.

In Iowa, railroaders had a friend named Lorenz Coffin, who worked on Iowa's Railroad Commission. Coffin had been a chaplain in the Civil War and had seen many soldiers injured in battle. He did not want railroad workers to experience similar injuries. After much lobbying, Coffin persuaded the Iowa legislature to pass the Iowa Safety Appliance Act in 1890. This law required that railroad companies in Iowa install safety devices, such as automatic couplers and airbrakes, to reduce injuries suffered by railroad workers.

By the 1890s, railroad companies began to discriminate against workers with previous injuries, even if the injury did not interfere with the worker's job. Bosses said injured workers were slow and accident-prone; managers thought that if the public saw injured workers on the job, riders would think train travel was unsafe. By 1900, even a minor injury might be considered a career-ending disability.

This workplace discrimination helped to convince most railroaders that they needed to band together to help their fellow workers. In 1890, railroaders, with the help of Lorenzo Coffin, started a home for railroad workers with disabilities. The home helped to care for railroaders who had disabilities and provided severely injured men a place to stay while they recuperated.

Today, it is illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities in workplaces in Iowa and across the country. G7

– John Williams-Searle

Hattie Voeklers

On a farm near Donahue, Iowa, in February 1906, Henry and Frieda Voelkers welcomed their third child, Hattie, into the world. Soon the Voelkers realized she required special care. Hattie developed slowly, both mentally and physically. Today, we identify children like Hattie as having **Down Syndrome.**

At the turn of the century, doctors had very little understanding of mental disabilities. Special programs to enhance children's lives did not exist.

As Hattie grew, the family learned of a school for children with mental disabilities at Glenwood. Henry Voelkers refused to send Hattie there.

At that time, many educators at schools like Glenwood did not believe children like Hattie could learn to read and write. Instead, children learned manual jobs including farm work, sewing, and cooking. Unlike at regular schools, children stayed in these institutions year round. Long distances from home made family visits rare. Although it appeared that her parents were less loving of Hattie, her father may have kept her at home to protect her from institutional conditions.

Hattie could dress herself and complete simple chores. She became an important contributor to the household. She washed dishes, tended the garden, and gathered eggs. Hattie spent her spare time doing needlework. Hattie's ability to work freed her parents to do the other labor required on an early 1900s farm.

However, Hattie's parents may also have kept her at home because of society's views toward people with disabilities. In the early 1900s, the birth of a disabled child to immigrant families, like the Voelkers who were German-American, was often used as a reason to limit immigration to the United States. And because the Voelkers were successful farmers in the community, anything less than perfect reflected badly on the family.

Despite these attitudes, Hattie was not kept from family events. She enjoyed birthday and holiday celebrations. This contact with her extended family may have helped Hattie develop with greater success than if she was sent away from home.

Hattie and her older sister Hilda pose in a Davenport photo studio, around 1909.

Hattie stayed with her parents until their deaths, when her siblings cared for her. Hattie settled permanently with her older sister, Hilda. There she assisted with the housekeeping and spent many hours doing "fancy work" sewing. Hattie died at home in 1974 at the age of 68. Her family donated her sewing kit to the State Historical Society of Iowa. GF *–Jennie Morgan*

Down Syndrome – a genetic disorder associated with an extra chromosome and mental retardation

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Kurt Kehrli

Photo courtesy Millie K. Frese

Kurt won a gold medal in swimming in the the 1987 Special International Olympics.

My brother Kurt calls every Friday night. We talk about the ordinary events of the day, passing the phone around so everyone in my family can say hello. We talk about his job on the cleaning crew at Opportunity Village in Clear Lake where he lives in a group home. And we like to talk about when we were kids.

"Remember the time we rode in a paddle boat at Lake Okoboji and you made me do all the paddling?" he asked.

Funny, that's not how I remember it.

"Remember when Dad carved the pumpkins and we stuck our hands in the slimy insides to pull out all the seeds?" Kurt recalls. "I didn't mind it, but you thought it was gross."

That's exactly how I remember it.

When Kurt was seven and I was three, our parents enrolled him in Martin Luther Home and School in Beatrice, Nebraska. It was an agonizing decision.

Public schools in Manchester, our hometown, didn't offer special education classes in the early 1960s. Kurt attended a school operated by the county and the local Association for Retarded Citizens, but soon outgrew the program. He needed a place where people could help him achieve.

That's when I first realized there was something different about Kurt. My brother. My best friend.

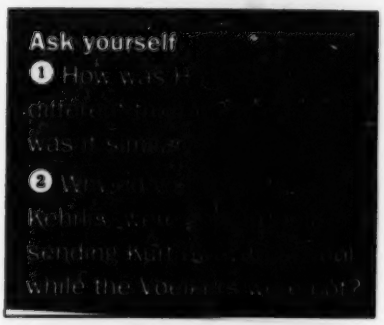
When Kurt was born, doctors called him "mongoloid." Today his disability is known as Down Syndrome.

Beatrice was nine hours from home, but we made the trip often. We stayed close through phone calls and letters. When I was six, Dad learned how to fly so we could visit Kurt and bring him home for vacations.

When Kurt was home, sometimes he'd visit school with me. My friends, who had grown up knowing Kurt, welcomed him. Other kids weren't always so kind. Some would point and stare and call him names.

When Kurt was 18 he moved to Handicap Village in Clear Lake. Today it's called Opportunity Village. The Village balances the supervision Kurt requires with the freedom he needs to challenge him. He works, goes into town to shop, helps with the housework, and does his own laundry. Best of all, he's happy. GF

– Millie K. Frese



It's the law

Serving people with disabilities

There was a time when parents were advised to institutionalize children with disabilities. But today, people with disabilities demand a place in this world — not apart from it. And the laws reflect this change.

Support for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the U.S. Congress grew out of the need to give equal rights to people with disabilities. Adopted in 1990, the ADA has Iowa roots. Iowa Senator Tom Harkin sponsored the bill with his own brother's disability in mind.

"I wanted to see future generations of Americans who were born with a disability or suffered a disability from accident or disease have a better opportunity for a full and meaningful life than my brother did," Senator Harkin told *The Goldfinch*.

Spinal meningitis left Tom Harkin's older brother, Frank, deaf more than 60 years ago.

As a child, Frank was sent to what was then known as the Iowa School for the Deaf and Dumb in Council Bluffs. "He'd say to me, 'I may be deaf, but I am not dumb,'" Senator Harkin remembered. Frank's vocational options were limited to training as a baker, shoe cobbler, or printer's assistant. Discrimination – whether intentional or accidental – often caused people with disabilities to withdraw into their own small, safe world, invisible to the rest of society.

The ADA attempts to break down physical and social barriers and enlarges the world for people with disabilities.

"The ADA doesn't say that you have to hire someone with a disability," Senator Harkin explained. "It says you can't discriminate against someone who is otherwise qualified for the job because of a disability."

The ADA also requires businesses and other public places to become more accessible.

Restaurants are making facilities accessible to patrons in wheelchairs and offering alternative ways to communicate with diners with disabilities, such as reading the menu aloud to someone who cannot see it.

Access to public buildings has improved with wider doors and ramps. Public parks are developed with accessible walkways, restrooms, and play areas.

"The biggest change is something you can't see," Senator Harkin said, "but you can feel it. It's the change in attitude."

Society used to ignore people with disabilities. Today, television programs often feature characters with disabilities. Toy companies are marketing dolls in wheelchairs. Catalogs use models with disabilities.

The ADA has helped people with disabilities raise their own expectations. "It's given kids with disabilities a reason to work harder, study harder, and to dream," Harkin said. "Now they know they can do it." GF

— Millie K. Frese

The polio epidemics

Seven children with polio celebrate a birthday in a Des Moines Hospital, 1952.

In 1947, Nick Critelli started a polio fund basket and asked his co-workers at Miller's Dry Cleaning Plant in Des Moines to contribute. Nick attached a sign to the basket that read: "You may be next so contribute $."

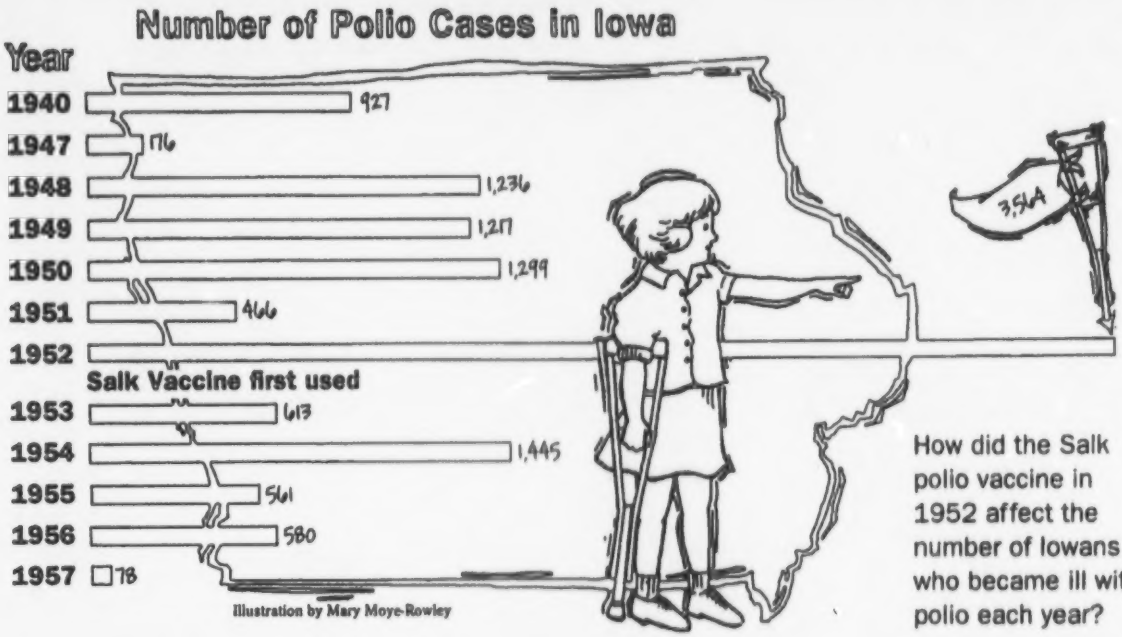
Throughout the early and mid 1900s, polio was a much-feared virus among Americans.

Poliomyelitis is a virus that spreads easily. The virus affects the muscles and sometimes leads to paralysis. Other symptoms include headaches, stiffness, sore throats, and fevers. Because of its effect on children, the virus used to be called infantile paralysis.

Polio raged through the United States between 1890 and the 1950s, affecting thousands of Iowans. President Franklin D. Roosevelt became ill with polio in 1921. He was paralyzed from the waist down and unable to walk.

Patients who were not paralyzed by the virus had to relearn to walk and move. For other patients, paralysis meant learning to live in a wheelchair.

Polio cases in Iowa were so



How did the Salk polio vaccine in 1952 affect the number of Iowans who became ill with polio each year?

numerous that the first private polio treatment center opened in Des Moines in 1942.

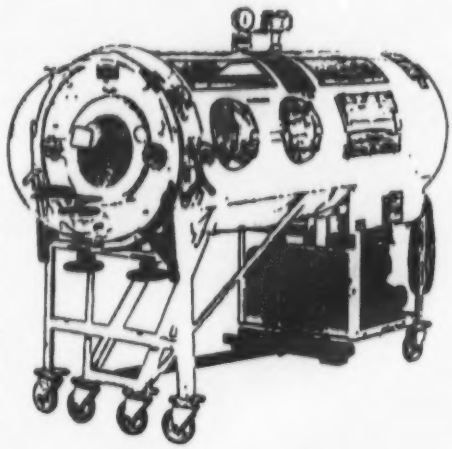
Prior to the 1940s, Iowans with polio numbered in the hundreds. By the 1950s, thousands of people contracted polio around the state.

Because the virus spread easily among children, parents worried that their child would become ill with polio. They kept their children away from public places they thought would infect their children, such as swimming pools and even schools.

Vaccines in the 1950s reduced the number of people who became ill with polio. By 1957, the number of people who contracted the polio virus in Iowa dropped to 78. By 1965, 72 people nationwide became ill with polio.

Americans were grateful that the polio epidemic was over. But for those whose bodies were forever affected by the virus, the struggle continued. Today, there are an estimated 3,000 polio survivors living in Iowa. GF

Adapted from an article by Ginalie Swaim



SHSI (Des Moines) Photo by Chuck Greiner

When polio weakened the lungs, people lived in "iron lungs" that helped them breathe.

Living with polio

by Judy Holt

I was born Judy Ellen Herron, July 7, 1945, on a farm south of Coon Rapids, Iowa.

On a warm summer day in July, three days after my fourth birthday, I contracted a viral infection that turned out to be infantile paralysis, or polio. One day I was a healthy, normal four-year-old girl, and the next day I was unable to walk, sit, turn over in bed, or even feed myself.

I was taken to Blank Memorial Hospital in Des Moines. One week after I was diagnosed, my brother Jerry was also diagnosed with polio and admitted to the hospital. His infection was not as severe and he went home after only a brief stay.

In July 1952, at the age of seven, I was sponsored by the March of Dimes to go to Warm Springs, Georgia, where Franklin D. Roosevelt had built a polio treatment facility.

During my first six-month stay at Warm Springs I had numerous operations to straighten my knees and feet. For the next seven years I returned to Warm Springs many times for treatment.

During the years of hospitalization, my schooling was haphazard. Mostly I had tutors.

My high school experience was a challenge for everyone. I was matched with another student, Nancy, who had the same classes I did. She would wheel me to class and help with my personal needs. For study halls, we reported to the "sick room" where there was a bed so I could rest. Mostly we talked!

The school had outside steps and stairs inside. Three boys were selected to carry me up and down the stairs.

My senior year (1964) went fast. I was in chorus and on the yearbook staff. As class treasurer I collected money from magazine sales for our senior class trip to Chicago. But a week before the trip, the school principal contacted my parents and said that I would be too much trouble to take on the trip – that I would slow down the rest of the group. I was crushed. When my classmates returned from the trip, several of them told me that I wouldn't have been a problem. It was a sign of the times, but people with disabilities should be with able-bodied people on all levels because once you're out in the real world, there are no favors. GF

This picture of Judy Holt, taken when she was five, was used for a March of Dimes poster. Photo courtesy Judy Holt

Editor's Note: This article was excerpted from Holt's book, My World Has Access Now. *In 1991, Judy was named Handicapped Woman of Iowa. Today, she lives and works in Iowa City.*

A place for Caleb

by Jen Golay

"Hey! It's the Hunchback of Pearl City! He's got one shoulder higher than the other! Come on, Caleb! Stand up straight!"

Twelve-year-old Caleb Bryant tried not to listen to the boy. He almost couldn't go outside without someone taunting him for his deformity. Caleb had scoliosis.

Caleb lived in Muscatine, Iowa, nicknamed the Pearl City because of the 53 pearl button factories making buttons out of freshwater clam shells fished out of the Mississippi River. In 1897, factories were a popular place to earn money. Even children worked in the factories. There were no laws that said children couldn't work.

Caleb's whole family worked in the button factories. Father was a cutter who used saws to cut as many button blanks out of one shell as possible. This was a high-paying, dangerous job. Mother worked at a finishing machine drilling holes in the center of the buttons and sending them to be polished. Caleb's younger sister May sorted buttons and sewed them on cards to be sold in the stores. May and Mother often brought work home in the evenings to increase their pay. They got paid by how many buttons they sewed on cards. Joseph, Caleb's older brother, worked at the grinding machines, grinding off the rough side of the blanks.

The taunting boy's voice faded as Caleb walked to the grocer's store. The June sun warmed his skin; he almost felt happy. But something inside nagged at Caleb. He was lonely. While his family and friends worked, Caleb was stuck at home. "All because of my ugly body," Caleb told himself.

"Morning, Caleb," boomed the grocer. "What can I get for you?"

"Mother needs sugar and flour."

"Sounds like fixins for cake," said Marcus, gathering the supplies.

"My birthday is next week."

"You don't sound very excited about it," Marcus said as he handed Caleb his change with his only hand. "Afraid you

won't get a present?" Marcus grinned.

"All I want is to be like everyone else. Joe and May complain about the awful working conditions at the factory. They tell me I'm lucky because I don't have to work there. But I want to help the family earn money. We're so poor and I can't do anything about it. Mother and Father have to work long hours to support us all."

"I know how you feel," sympathized Marcus. "I remember how I felt right after my hand got cut off by one of those cutter machines. My wife had to work 18 hour days to make up for my wages. I felt useless. Then I got this job. I didn't think I could do it with one hand. I was surprised how quickly I found ways to do things I thought I couldn't."

"You're lucky. No factory boss is going to hire a cripple like me," said Caleb. "Joe says you've got to be strong to work in the factories."

"Why don't you work at home sewing buttons on cards like your mother and sister?"

Caleb scoffed at the idea. "That's girl's work!"

"Suit yourself," sighed Marcus, sliding Caleb's grocery order across the counter.

Caleb left the market feeling worse than before. He'd rather be lonely than do a girl's job!

The taunting boy was still standing on the corner of Caleb's street. "Here comes the Hunchback of Pearl City again! Why don't your parents keep you at home so we don't have to look at your ugly body?"

"Why aren't you working? Won't anyone hire you?" Caleb hollered.

"I don't want a job. But at least I could get one. No one would want you. You're useless."

Caleb turned to go home without answering. Caleb knew the boy was right. He was useless.

That evening, Caleb sat quietly in the shadows of the front porch watching Mother and

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

May sew buttons on the cards. He thought of the dinner table conversation between Father and Mother. Father had said they'd have to sell mother's emerald necklace to pay the bills for the growing family. Caleb could still see the anguished expression on his mother's face. He knew that necklace had been a gift from Grandmother when Mother was a girl. Would sewing buttons on cards really be that bad?

"Mother," said Caleb moving out of the shadows. "Is that hard?"

"No, dear, only a little dull. I wish I could read and sew buttons at the same time," Mother laughed.

"Could I try?" asked Caleb.

Mother looked a bit surprised, but she silently handed Caleb a needle, thread, and a button card. She pushed the big basket of buttons toward Caleb. She didn't laugh or try to help Caleb as he struggled to manipulate the needle and the button card. By the end of the evening, Caleb had sewn buttons on five cards. This didn't seem like much, but Caleb felt proud.

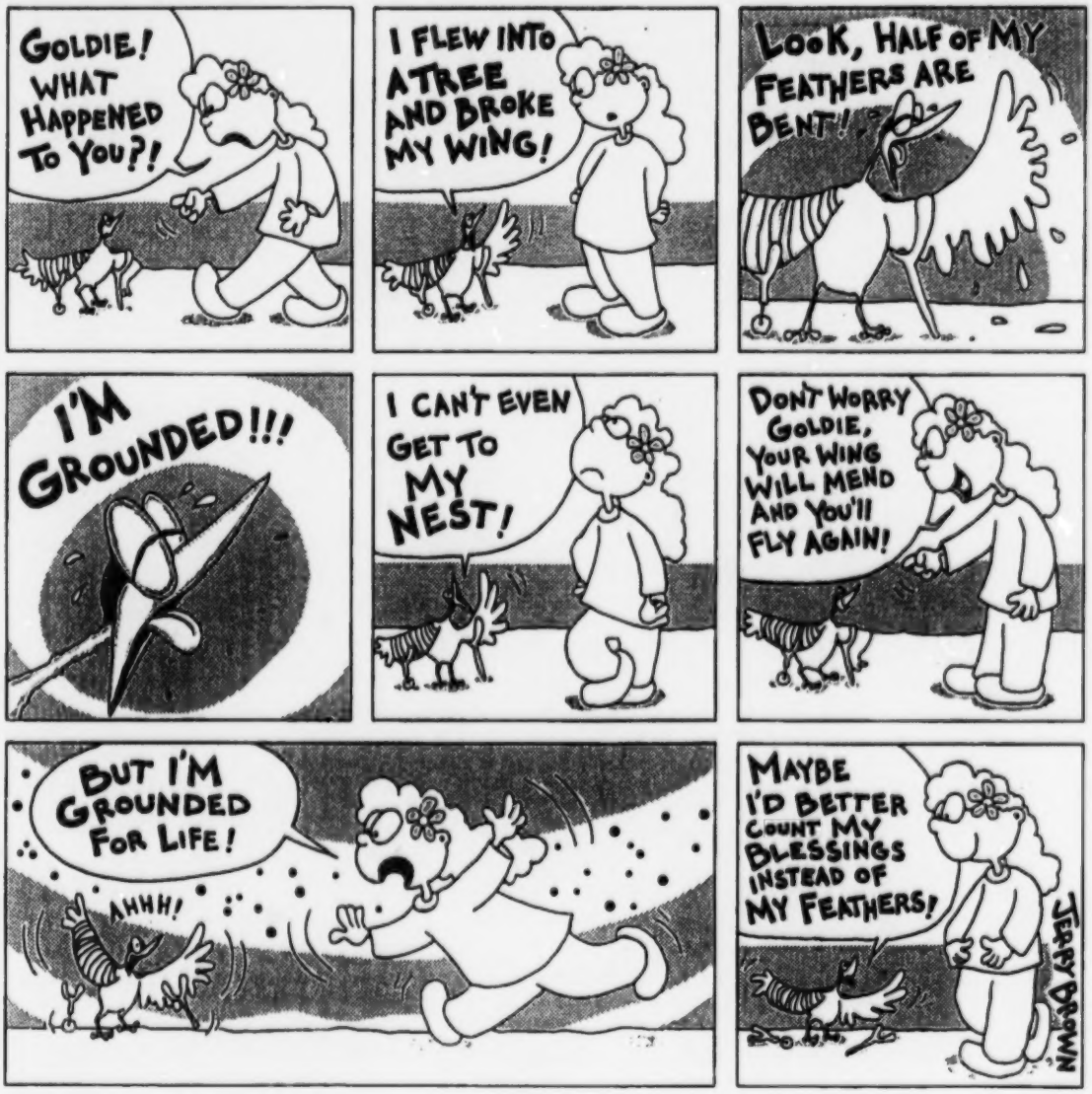
"Thank you, Caleb," said Mother. "Would you like to help me tomorrow night too?"

Caleb thought a minute. "Yes, I think I would. Do you think I could do this during the day too? Then I could help earn money. Maybe you won't have to sell your necklace."

Tears clouded Mother's eyes. "I'll ask my boss to send home extra work."

Caleb imagined long summer days of sewing buttons on cards. They weren't the empty days he saw that morning. They were happy, useful days.

The Roost


GOLDIE! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!
I FLEW INTO A TREE AND BROKE MY WING!
LOOK, HALF OF MY FEATHERS ARE BENT!
I'M GROUNDED!!!
I CAN'T EVEN GET TO MY NEST!
DON'T WORRY GOLDIE, YOUR WING WILL MEND AND YOU'LL FLY AGAIN!
BUT I'M GROUNDED FOR LIFE!
AHHH!
MAYBE I'D BETTER COUNT MY BLESSINGS INSTEAD OF MY FEATHERS!
JERRY BROWN

Old Places

What do these buildings tell us?

Photos courtesy Woodward State Hospital School, Woodward, Iowa

Historians study architecture to learn about people's lives. These two buildings at the State Hospital School in Woodward, Iowa, give clues to what life was like at the school in different times in Iowa history.

Building #1 was built in the 1930s and was modeled after the first school buildings built in 1915. The design reflects 19th- and early 20th-century attitudes toward people with disabilities. People lived in hospital-like buildings because they were regarded as sick. They slept in wards – long rooms lined with beds – and ate in large dining facilities. There was little privacy for the residents, who were often called inmates. Such a building could house hundreds of people. Because the building was self-contained, residents didn't have much exposure to the outside world.

Building #2 was constructed in the 1970s. By then, it was thought that people with disabilities needed to learn how to live independently. Today, residents live in small cottages, like the one pictured here, and share such responsibilities as cooking and cleaning.

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